

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L MUMBAI 002478

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SA/INS, NEA/IPA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/29/14

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [TSPA](#) [PTER](#) [IS](#) [IN](#) [GOI](#)

SUBJECT: ISRAEL REOPENS CONSULATE IN MUMBAI

REF: New Delhi 7348

1. (C) On November 15 visiting Israeli MFA officials briefed Acting PO and Pol/Econ Chief on Israel's decision to reopen its consulate in Mumbai. Israel closed its consulate in Mumbai in mid-2003 as part of cost-cutting measures that affected Israeli diplomatic posts around the world, Israeli MFA official Amos Nadai told ConGen officers.

2. (C) Nadai, deputy director general for Asia/Pacific in the Israeli MFA, said the Israeli government now realized that the closure of the Mumbai consulate was a "mistake." Israel was interested in deepening its relationship with India, and closing the consulate had sent the wrong signal to the Indian government. Nadai added, however, that the GOI had not put any pressure on Israel to reopen the consulate, but was welcoming the decision. The consulate's main job would be to promote bilateral trade: India had become an important destination for Israeli arms exports, and commercial, non-military ties were also growing. Bilateral commercial trade with India, which amounted to around \$1.5 billion in 2003, was expected to top \$2 billion this year.

3. (SBU) Mordehai Amihai, Director of the South and SE Asia department of the MFA, and Barukh Binah, head of the bureau of international affairs in the MFA's center for political research, accompanied Nadai to Mumbai. They stopped in the city while en route to New Delhi for bilateral talks with the GOI (reftel). Amihai told us Israel had identified India as one of three countries where the growth in commercial ties was most promising. (Russia and China are the others.) In a November 22 discussion with Pol/Econ chief, Daniel Sivan, the consulate's new DPO, confirmed that Vice Prime Minister Ehud Olmert will lead a delegation of about 100 Israeli business reps on a trade mission to India in early December. Olmert will visit New Delhi, Mumbai and Bangalore, Sivan said, echoing reports in the Israeli press over the weekend.

4. (C) Nadai said a new consul general will most probably be named within the next several weeks and that, judging from the shortlist of candidates he'd seen, will likely be someone without prior diplomatic experience in India. The CG and Sivan will man the consulate along with an Israeli security detachment and a small local staff, Sivan said. The Israeli government never terminated the lease on its facility, which occupies an upper-level floor in a high-rise in southern Mumbai's financial district, and was hence able to re-open the consulate quickly. Nadai queried A/PO about security and general safety in Mumbai. Sivan, who told Pol/Econ chief that he worked as a finance officer at the MFA in Jerusalem, arrived in Mumbai this past summer. The consulate was already issuing visas and providing services to Israeli businessmen and tourists in Mumbai, Sivan said. According to press reports, the consulate is already receiving about 400 visa applications monthly.

Comment

-----

5. (C) Several years ago, some Muslim observers publicly criticized the initial opening of the Israeli consulate in Mumbai. They asked whether an increased official Israeli presence in India was consistent with the GOI's criticism of Israeli policy towards the Palestinians. This time around the Urdu language press, like the rest of the India media, did report briefly about the re-opening of the Israeli consulate. However, public criticism from Muslim quarters has been absent, which may be an indication of the increased normalcy surrounding Indian/Israeli relations. That said, we observe that Mumbai Muslims remain disturbed and concerned about the Israeli/Palestinian conflict.

SIMMONS